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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, May 12, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Using Your Strawberry Crop." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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The young man who courted Curly Locks made some ardent vows about her future, as young men often do under such circumstances. But he didn't offer diamonds and orchids. He promised that Curly Locks should "feast upon strawberries, sugar and cream." Which only goes to show that people have considered strawberries great delicacies for many years, and that they discovered long ago about that perfect combination--fresh strawberries and cream.

In these days of rapid transportation and refrigeration, strawberries are often for sale in the dead of winter even in cold climates. But the housekeeper with an eye on her pocketbook buys strawberries like other fresh foods--in season. For products in season are best and cheapest. Families who are lucky have strawberry beds in their own gardens to supply fresh fruit right off the vines. No strawberries have a better flavor than those just picked.

These early-season berries are some of our most delicate fruits. And that's an important point to remember in preparing and serving them. They're delicate in structure--full of juice with little fiber. They're delicate in flavor, and delicate in color. They bruise easily and spoil easily. If you treat them carelessly, they are likely to lose color, shape and good flavor.

If you are going to make the most of this delicious spring fruit, you need to treat it gently from the time you bring it into your kitchen. Of course, if you have your own berries, you are sure to have them fresh. If you buy strawberries at the market and must keep them for a day or two, give them the best care. Take them out of the basket at once and spread them out on a large plate or platter where the air can reach them. Then cover the platter with waxed paper and set it in the refrigerator. All berries keep better if you don't wash them until shortly before serving. Wet, soaked berries are likely to mold or decay.

Now about preparing the berries. Since they're very likely to be sandy, they often need a thorough washing. But be gentle as well as thorough about this bath. Wash the berries with the hulls on. Put them in the colander and run a spray of water over them. Since the stream of water from the faucet may bruise or break them, better make a spray by putting your hand under the faucet. Then here's another point. Be careful that the berries don't get water-soaked. That spoils them. So don't wash them floating them in a bowl of water. The spray method is better. When the berries have drained, remove the hulls. If any bits of sand remain, you can give each berry a quick rinse.

All these details may seem unimportant. But in these economy days, none of us can afford to waste or spoil food by careless preparation. We all believe in making the most of the food we have, and in saving all appetizing qualities. A little sand



will spoil a beautiful dish of strawberries. Rough washing and handling may crush even perfect fruit and spoil both the looks and the taste. So these small details are economy points after all.

Whether you put sugar on your berries early or late depends on the way you plan to serve them. If you want the berries to appear on the table firm and whole, add sugar the last minute. If you want strawberry sauce with plenty of juice to use on shortcake or ice cream, crush the berries or cut them up, add sugar and let them stand. The sugar helps draw out the juice. If you want a very juicy sauce, you can crush part of the berries, add sugar and cook them just a few minutes. Then mix these heated berries with the fresh ones.

Now some ways to serve fresh strawberries. No fancy dish is better than a bowl of fresh, ripe, red, perfect berries, just as nature made them, served with or without sugar and cream. If you like combinations, fresh berries are delicious with fresh diced pineapple or fresh grapefruit. A dessert that would have pleased Curly Locks is Strawberry Supreme. You make this by folding fresh berries into sweetened stiff whipped cream. Add a biny bit of salt to bring out the flavor. We've mentioned fresh strawberry sauce for shortcake and ice-cream sundaes. This sauce is also good poured over sponge cake or angel cake and used to make fresh strawberry ice cream and strawberry mousse.

But if you own a strawberry bed, you probably can't use all your fruit fresh. Perhaps you'll want to cook some of the surplus berries and put up others for winter. Here some problems arise. Cooking changes these berries in both looks and taste. They are so delicate in structure and so full of juice that they cook down quickly. So never add water in cooking and making your cooking time as short as possible. Simply add sugar to the berries, put them over the heat and cook until just tender.

Strawberries are not very successful canned. They are likely to lose their shape during processing and to fade on standing in jars. Strawberry preserves and jams are generally more successful. However, if you do can strawberries, be sure to "plump" them by letting them stand overnight in the kettle they were cooked in. During this time they will absorb some of their own syrup. Here are the simple directions for canning strawberries. To each quart of berries add 1 cup of sugar. Boil slowly for 3 or 4 minutes, stirring gently. Then let stand overnight in the kettle. In the morning reheat the mixture to boiling, fill the containers hot, and process all sizes of jars for five minutes in boiling water. For home canning of strawberries, use glass jars. Store in a dark, cool, dry place.

Time now for another inexpensive spring dinner. The menu: Breaded filet of fish, fried; Asparagus simmered in milk; New potatoes with parsley; Crisp radishes; Strawberries and fresh pineapple, served cold; Wafers; and Coffee.

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Monday: Homemade Bread."

